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Pattern of conferences

Report of the Fifth Committee

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I. Introduction

1. At its 2nd plenary meeting, on 18 September 2009, the General Assembly, on the recommendation of the General Committee, decided to include in the agenda of its sixty-fourth session the item entitled "Pattern of conferences" and to allocate it to the Fifth Committee.

2. The Fifth Committee considered the item at its 6th and 21st meetings, on 16 October and 18 December 2009. Statements and observations made in the course of the Committee's consideration of the item are reflected in the relevant summary records (A/C.5/64/SR.6 and 21).

3. For its consideration of the item, the Committee had before it the following documents:

(a) Report of the Committee on Conferences;[1]

(b) Report of the Secretary-General on the pattern of conferences (A/64/136);

(c) Related report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (A/64/484);

(d) Report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on the evaluation of the integrated global management initiative of the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management (A/64/166);

(e) Letter dated 8 September 2009 from the Permanent Representative of the Philippines to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General (A/64/371).

[1] *Official Records of the General Assembly, Sixty-fourth Session, Supplement No. 32* (A/64/32).

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II. Consideration of draft resolution A/C.5/64/L.10

4. At its 21st meeting, on 18 December, the Committee had before it a draft resolution entitled "Pattern of conferences" (A/C.5/64/L.10), submitted by the Vice-Chairperson of the Committee, the representative of Senegal, on the basis of informal consultations.

5. At the same meeting, the Committee adopted draft resolution A/C.5/64/L.10 without a vote (see para. 6).

III. Recommendation of the Fifth Committee

6. The Fifth Committee recommends to the General Assembly the adoption of the following draft resolution:

Pattern of conferences

The General Assembly,

Recalling its relevant resolutions, including resolutions 40/243 of 18 December 1985, 41/213 of 19 December 1986, 43/222 A to E of 21 December 1988, 51/211 A to E of 18 December 1996, 52/214 of 22 December 1997, 53/208 A to E of 18 December 1998, 54/248 of 23 December 1999, 55/222 of 23 December 2000, 56/242 of 24 December 2001, 56/254 D of 27 March 2002, 56/262 of 15 February 2002, 56/287 of 27 June 2002, 57/283 A of 20 December 2002, 57/283 B of 15 April 2003, 58/250 of 23 December 2003, 59/265 of 23 December 2004, 60/236 A of 23 December 2005, 60/236 B of 8 May 2006, 61/236 of 22 December 2006, 62/225 of 22 December 2007, 63/248 of 24 December 2008 and 63/284 of 30 June 2009,

Reaffirming its resolution 42/207 C of 11 December 1987, in which it requested the Secretary-General to ensure the equal treatment of the official languages of the United Nations,

Having considered the report of the Committee on Conferences for 2009,[1] the relevant reports of the Secretary-General[2] and the report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on the evaluation of the integrated global management initiative of the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management,[3]

Having also considered the report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions,[4]

Reaffirming the pertinent provisions relating to conference services in its resolutions on multilingualism, in particular resolution 63/306 of 9 September 2009,

Bearing in mind its resolutions 60/251 of 15 March 2006 and 62/219 of 22 December 2007, Human Rights Council resolutions 5/1 of 18 June 2007[5] and 8/1 of 18 June 2008[6] and decision 9/103 of 24 September 2008[7] and the Council President's statements 8/1 of 9 April 2008[8] and 9/2 of 24 September 2008,[9]

Stressing that the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review of the Human Rights Council adopted reports on the review of thirty-two Member States at its fourth and fifth sessions,

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[1] *Official Records of the General Assembly, Sixty-fourth Session, Supplement No. 32* (A/64/32).

[2] A/63/735 and A/64/136.

[3] A/64/166.

[4] A/64/484.

[5] See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Sixty-second Session, Supplement No. 53* (A/62/53), chap. IV.A.

[6] Ibid., *Sixty-third Session, Supplement No. 53* (A/63/53), chap. III.A.

[7] Ibid., *Supplement No. 53 A* (A/63/53/Add.1), chap. II.

[8] Ibid., *Supplement No. 53* (A/63/53), chap. III.C.

[9] Ibid., *Supplement No. 53 A* (A/63/53/Add.1), chap. III.

Noting that thirteen of the reports adopted at the fourth session of the Working Group were not issued as documents of the United Nations in the six official languages prior to their consideration and adoption by the Council at its eleventh session and that the processing and issuance of two of the reports adopted by the Working Group at its fifth session remain delayed,

Recalling the importance of multilingualism in the work of the United Nations and the need to issue all of the reports of the Working Group in all official languages of the Organization,

I
Calendar of conferences and meetings

1. *Welcomes* the report of the Committee on Conferences for 2009;[1]

2. *Approves* the draft biennial calendar of conferences and meetings of the United Nations for 2010 and 2011, as submitted by the Committee on Conferences,[10] taking into account the observations of the Committee and subject to the provisions of the present resolution;

3. *Requests* the Secretary-General to examine the feasibility and the implications of all options and proposals to adjust the calendar of conferences and meetings and other options aimed at addressing the problem of timely availability and consideration of documentation for the Fifth Committee and to report thereon at its sixty-fifth session through the Committee on Conferences;

4. *Authorizes* the Committee on Conferences to make any adjustments to the calendar of conferences and meetings for 2010 and 2011 that may become necessary as a result of actions and decisions taken by the General Assembly at its sixty-fourth session;

5. *Notes with satisfaction* that the Secretariat has taken into account the arrangements referred to in General Assembly resolutions 53/208 A, 54/248, 55/222, 56/242, 57/283 B, 58/250, 59/265, 60/236 A, 61/236, 62/225 and 63/248 concerning Orthodox Good Friday and the official holidays of Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha, and requests all intergovernmental bodies to observe those decisions when planning their meetings;

6. *Requests* the Secretary-General to ensure that any modification to the calendar of conferences and meetings is implemented strictly in accordance with the mandate of the Committee on Conferences and other relevant resolutions of the General Assembly;

7. *Notes* that accurate, timely and consistent information provided to the Fifth Committee during its informal consultations facilitates the decision-making process in the Committee;

II
A. Utilization of conference-servicing resources

1. *Reaffirms* the practice that, in the use of conference rooms, priority must be given to the meetings of Member States;

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[10] Ibid., *Sixty-fourth Session, Supplement No. 32* (A/64/32), annex II.

2. *Notes* that the overall utilization factor at the four main duty stations in 2008 was 85 per cent as compared with 83 per cent in 2007 and 2006, which is above the established benchmark of 80 per cent;

3. *Welcomes* the steps taken by those bodies that have adjusted their programmes of work in order to achieve the optimum utilization of conference-servicing resources, and requests the Committee on Conferences to continue consultations with the secretariats and bureaux of bodies that underutilize their conference-servicing resources;

4. *Recognizes* that late starts and unplanned early endings seriously affect the bodies' utilization factor owing to the amount of time lost, and invites the secretariats and bureaux of bodies to pay adequate attention to avoiding late starts and unplanned early endings;

5. *Notes* that the percentage of meetings held by the bodies entitled to meet "as required" that were provided with interpretation services in New York in 2008 was 90 per cent, as compared with 88 per cent in 2007, and requests the Secretary-General to continue to report on the provision of conference services to these bodies through the Committee on Conferences;

6. *Recognizes* the importance of meetings of regional and other major groupings of Member States for the smooth functioning of the sessions of intergovernmental bodies, requests the Secretary-General to ensure that, as far as possible, all requests for conference services for the meetings of regional and other major groupings of Member States are met, and requests the Secretariat to inform the requestors as early as possible about the availability of conference services, including interpretation, as well as about any changes that might occur before the meeting;

7. *Regrets* that the percentage of meetings held by regional and other major groupings of Member States that were provided with interpretation services at the four main duty stations was 77 per cent in 2008 as compared to 84 per cent in 2007, and requests the Secretary-General to continue to employ innovative means to address the difficulties experienced by Member States owing to the lack of conference services for some meetings of regional and other major groupings of Member States and to report thereon to the General Assembly through the Committee on Conferences;

8. *Once again urges* intergovernmental bodies to spare no effort at the planning stage to take into account the meetings of regional and other major groupings of Member States, to make provision for such meetings in their programmes of work and to notify conference services, well in advance, of any cancellations so that unutilized conference-servicing resources may, to the extent possible, be reassigned to meetings of regional and other major groupings of Member States;

9. *Notes with satisfaction* that, in accordance with several General Assembly resolutions, including resolution 61/236, section II.A, paragraph 9, in conformity with the headquarters rule, all meetings of Nairobi-based United Nations bodies were held in Nairobi in 2008, and requests the Secretary-General to report thereon to the Assembly at its sixty-fifth session through the Committee on Conferences;

10. *Notes with appreciation* ongoing promotional efforts and initiatives undertaken by the management of the conference centre of the Economic Commission for Africa, which led to a continued upward trend in utilization of the premises in 2008;

11. *Requests* the Secretary-General to continue to explore means to increase the utilization of the conference centre of the Economic Commission for Africa, bearing in mind the headquarters minimum operating security standards, and to report thereon to the General Assembly at its sixty-fifth session;

12. *Calls upon* the Secretary-General and Member States to adhere to the guidelines and procedures contained in the administrative instruction for the authorization of the use of United Nations premises for meetings, conferences, special events and exhibits;[11]

13. *Emphasizes* that such meetings, conferences, special events and exhibits must be consistent with the purposes and principles of the United Nations;

B. Impact of the capital master plan, strategy IV (phased approach), on meetings held at Headquarters during its implementation

1. *Requests* the Secretary-General to ensure that the implementation of the capital master plan, including the temporary relocation of conference-servicing staff to a swing space, will not compromise the quality of conference services provided to Member States in the six official languages and the equal treatment of the language services, which should be provided with equally favourable working conditions and resources, with a view to receiving the maximum quality of services;

2. *Requests* all meeting requesters and organizers to liaise closely with the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management of the Secretariat on all matters related to the scheduling of meetings to allow maximum predictability in coordinating activities at Headquarters during the construction period;

3. *Requests* the Committee on Conferences to keep the matter under constant review, and requests the Secretary-General to report regularly to the Committee on matters pertaining to the calendar of conferences and meetings of the United Nations during the construction period;

4. *Requests* the Secretary-General to continue to provide adequate information technology support for conference services, within the existing resources of the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management, in order to ensure their seamless operation throughout the implementation of the capital master plan;

5. *Notes* that during the implementation of the capital master plan, a part of the conference-servicing staff and information technology resources of the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management has been temporarily relocated to a swing space, and requests the Secretary-General to continue to provide adequate support, within the existing resources of the Department, to ensure continued maintenance of the information technology facilities of the Department, implementation of the global information technology initiative and delivery of quality conference services;

[11] ST/AI/416.

6. *Requests* the Secretary-General to consult Member States on initiatives that affect the utilization of conference services and conference facilities;

III
Integrated global management

1. *Notes* the progress achieved in the implementation of the global information technology project, aimed at integrating, across duty stations, information technology into meetings management and documentation-processing systems, and the global approach to harmonizing standards and information technology and sharing good practices and technological achievements among conference services at the four main duty stations;

2. *Also notes* the initiatives undertaken in the context of integrated global management aimed at streamlining procedures, achieving economies of scale and improving the quality of conference services, and in this regard stresses the importance of ensuring equal treatment of conference-servicing staff as well as the principle of equal grade for equal work at the four main duty stations;

3. *Emphasizes* that the major goals of the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management are to provide high-quality documents in a timely manner in all official languages in accordance with established regulations, as well as high-quality conference services to Member States at all duty stations, and to achieve those aims as efficiently and cost-effectively as possible, in accordance with the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly;

4. *Requests* the Secretary-General to ensure that all language services are given equal treatment and are provided with equally favourable working conditions and resources, with a view to achieving maximum quality of services, with full respect for the specificities of the six official languages and taking into account their respective workloads;

5. *Reiterates* the need for the Secretary-General to ensure the compatibility of technologies used in all duty stations and to ensure that they are user-friendly in all official languages;

6. *Requests* the Secretary-General to complete the task of uploading all important older United Nations documents onto the United Nations website in all six official languages on a priority basis, so that these archives are also available to Member States through that medium;

7. *Reiterates* that the satisfaction of Member States is a key performance indicator in conference management and conference services;

8. *Requests* the Secretary-General to continue to ensure that measures taken by the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management to seek the evaluation by Member States of the quality of the conference services provided to them, as a key performance indicator of the Department, provide equal opportunities to Member States to present their evaluations in the six official languages of the United Nations and are in full compliance with relevant resolutions of the General Assembly, and requests the Secretary-General to report to the General Assembly, through the Committee on Conferences, on progress made in this regard;

9. *Also requests* the Secretary-General to continue to explore best practices and techniques in client satisfaction evaluations and to report on a regular basis to the General Assembly on the results achieved;

10. *Welcomes* the efforts made by the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management to seek the evaluation by Member States of the quality of the conference services provided to them, and requests the Secretary-General to continue to explore innovative ways to systematically capture and analyse feedback from Member States and committee chairpersons and secretaries on the quality of conference services and to report thereon to the General Assembly through the Committee on Conferences;

11. *Requests* the Secretary-General to keep the General Assembly apprised of progress made in integrated global management;

12. *Notes with concern* that the Secretary-General did not include in his report on the pattern of conferences[12] information about the financial savings achieved through implementation of the integrated global management projects as requested in section III, paragraph 4, of its resolution 63/248, and requests the Secretary-General to redouble his efforts to include this information in his next report on the pattern of conferences;

13. *Takes note* of the recommendations provided by the Office of Internal Oversight Services in its report,[3] and requests the Secretary-General to ensure their full implementation and to report thereon to the General Assembly at its sixty-fifth session through the Committee on Conferences;

IV
Documentation and publication-related matters

1. *Decides* that all the reports adopted by the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review of the Human Rights Council at its fourth and fifth sessions and the additional information submitted by the States under review before the adoption of the outcome by the Council shall be issued as documents in all official languages of the United Nations, and requests the Secretary-General to undertake the necessary measures to that effect;

2. *Also decides* that all reports adopted by the Working Group shall be issued as documents in all official languages of the United Nations in a timely manner before their consideration by the Council, in accordance with General Assembly resolutions 36/117 A of 10 December 1981, 51/211 A to E, 52/214, 53/208 A to E and 59/265, and requests the Secretary-General to ensure the necessary support to that effect;

3. *Emphasizes* the paramount importance of the equality of the six official languages of the United Nations;

4. *Reiterates* the importance of the timely issuance of documents for the Fifth Committee;

5. *Stresses* that matters related to conference management, including documentation, fall within the purview of the Fifth Committee;

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[12] A/64/136.

6. *Reiterates with concern* its request to the Secretary-General to ensure that the rules concerning the simultaneous distribution of documents in all six official languages are strictly respected as regards both the distribution of printed copies and the posting of parliamentary documentation on the Official Document System and the United Nations website, in keeping with section III, paragraph 5, of its resolution 55/222;

7. *Reaffirms* that the Fifth Committee is the appropriate Main Committee of the General Assembly entrusted with responsibilities for administrative and budgetary matters;

8. *Also reaffirms* its decision in section III, paragraph 9, of its resolution 59/265 that the issuance of documents in all six official languages on planning, budgetary and administrative matters requiring urgent consideration by the General Assembly shall be accorded priority;

9. *Reiterates its request* to the Secretary-General to direct all departments of the Secretariat to include the following elements in their reports:

(a) Summary of the report;

(b) Consolidated conclusions, recommendations and other proposed actions;

(c) Relevant background information;

10. *Reiterates its request* that all documents submitted to legislative organs by the Secretariat and intergovernmental and expert bodies for consideration and action have conclusions and recommendations in bold print;

11. *Recognizes* the work done by the task force chaired by the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management in positively addressing the problem of issuance of documents for the Fifth Committee;

12. *Welcomes* the continued efforts of the task force to shepherd the submission of documents by the author departments of the Secretariat;

13. *Expresses its deep concern* at the unprecedented high level of late submission of documentation, which, in turn, has a negative impact on the functioning of intergovernmental bodies, and urges author departments to fully adhere to deadlines in meeting the goal of 90 per cent submission compliance;

14. *Decides* to review, at its sixty-sixth session, the work of the task force and to consider, where necessary, additional measures to ensure compliance with submission deadlines by author departments if the goal of 90 per cent compliance is not met;

15. *Acknowledges* that a multipronged approach is required to find a solution to the perennial difficulties of the late issuance of documents for the Fifth Committee;

16. *Encourages* the Chairpersons of the Fifth Committee and the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions to promote cooperation between the two bodies in the sphere of documentation;

V
Translation and interpretation-related matters

1. *Requests* the Secretary-General to redouble his efforts to ensure the highest quality of interpretation and translation services in all six official languages;

2. *Also requests* the Secretary-General to continue to seek evaluation by Member States of the quality of the conference services provided to them, including through the language-specific informational meetings held twice a year, and to ensure that such measures provide equal opportunities to Member States to present their evaluations in the six official languages of the United Nations and are in full compliance with the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly;

3. *Reiterates its request* that the Secretary-General ensure that the terminology used in the translation and interpretation services reflects the latest linguistic norms and terminology of the official languages in order to ensure the highest quality;

4. *Reaffirms* section V, paragraph 3, of its resolution 61/236, section V, paragraph 3, of its resolution 62/225 and section V, paragraph 5, of its resolution 63/248, and reiterates its request that the Secretary-General, when recruiting temporary assistance in the language services, ensure that all language services are given equal treatment and are provided with equally favourable working conditions and resources, with a view to achieving maximum quality of their services, with full respect for the specificities of each of the six official languages and taking into account their respective workloads;

5. *Notes with appreciation* the measures taken by the Secretariat to fill current and future vacancies at the United Nations Office at Nairobi and the information contained in paragraphs 87 to 89 of the report of the Secretary-General on the pattern of conferences,[12] and requests the Secretary-General to consider further measures aimed at decreasing the vacancy rates in Nairobi and to report thereon to the General Assembly at its sixty-fifth session;

6. *Acknowledges* the measures undertaken by the Secretary-General, in accordance with its resolutions, to address the issue of the replacement of retiring staff in the language services, and requests the Secretary-General to maintain and intensify those efforts, including the strengthening of cooperation with institutions that train language specialists to meet the need in the six official languages of the United Nations;

7. *Requests* the Secretary-General to hold competitive examinations for the recruitment of language staff sufficiently in advance in order to fill current and future vacancies in language services in a timely manner, and to inform the General Assembly at its sixty-fifth session of efforts in this regard;

8. *Also requests* the Secretary-General to continue to improve the accuracy of translation of documents into the six official languages, giving particular significance to the quality of translation;

9. *Further requests* the Secretary-General to take the steps necessary to enhance translation quality in all six official languages, in particular for contractual translation, and to report thereon to the General Assembly at its sixty-fifth session;

10. *Requests* the Secretary-General to provide, at all duty stations, adequate staff at the appropriate level, with a view to ensuring appropriate quality control for external translation, with due consideration of the principle of equal grade for equal work;

11. *Takes note* of the information on the impact of freelance recruitment on the quality of interpretation at all duty stations contained in paragraphs 81 to 86 of the report of the Secretary-General,[17] and requests the Secretary-General to report on the issue to the General Assembly at its sixty-fifth session through the Committee on Conferences;

12. *Requests* the Secretary-General to report to the General Assembly at its sixty-fifth session on the experience, lessons learned and best practices of the main duty stations in performing quality control of contractual translations, including on requirements relating to the number and appropriate level of the staff needed to carry out this function.